

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 01018 271742Z

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7907

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PROP ET US

SUBJ: INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO TREAT US FAIRLY IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA

1. AT AMERICAN SOCIAL FUNCTION JAN 24, POL COUNSELOR HAD OCCASION TO EXPRESS HIS CONCERN AND REGRET TO MOFA'S AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR OVER TREATMENT OF US IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA. POL CONSELOR NOTED THAT OF LATE TONE OF EPMG-CONTROLLED MEDIA ON US POSITIONS HAD ON OCCASION BEEN SO DEPLORABLE AS TO RAISE QUESTION IN HIS MIND OF ITS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. AFTER ALL, SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA AND THE US HAD FRIENDLY RELATIONS. DIFFERENCES OF VIEW ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS COULD BE STATED DISPASSIONATELY.

2. WHEN POL COUNSELOR CALLED TO MOFA JAN 26 ON ANOTHER MATTER (ADDIS ABABA 0968), ATO TEFERRA SHAWL, MOFA SPOKESMAN, TOOK OPPORTUNITY FORMALLY AND OFFICIALLY TO REACT TO FOREGOING. HE SAID THAT UPON HEARING OF CONVERSATION FROM AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, HE HAD RAISED QUESTION WITH DIRG'S LT COL ASRATE DESTA, CHAIRMAN OF THE INFO AND PR COMMITTEE OF THE PMAC, AT AIRPORT JUST PRIOR TO LATTER'S DEPARTURE FOR EASTERN EUROPE (ADDIS ABABA 0746). LATTER HAD GIVEN REQUISITE
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INSTRUCTIONS. TEFERRA HAD THEREUPON CALLED MININFO

OFFICIALS AND DEPT HEADS TO "DEPLORE" EXCESSES IN HANDLING OF US IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA. HE HAD TOLD THEM THAT "THE ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL INTEREST DICTATES THE AVOIDANCE OF HOSTILE PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE US." TEFERRA SAID HE HAD TOLD MININFO TO CONTACT MEDIA REPS, WARN THEM AGAINST "IRRESPONSIBILITY" AND URGE UNBIASED TREATMENT OF US NEWS. NEWS AND COMMENTARY, MOREOVER, SHOULD BE KEPT SEPARATE. IN SHORT, TEFERRA SHAWL SAID, WE COULD BE ASSURED THAT HENCEFORTH US WOULD BE HANDLED "FAIRLY AND FAVORABLY" IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA.

3. COMMENT: EMB HAS NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT LT COL ASRATE AND MOFA DID INDEED GIVE SUCH INSTRUCTIONS. WE HAVE RUN INTO A NUMBER OF ETHIOPIANS WHO HAVE EXPRESSED TO US THEIR SHAME AT MEDIA TREATMENT OF US OF LATE. NEVERTHELESS, AS DEPT AWARE, EPMG CONTROL OVER ELEMENTS HOSTILE TO US IN MININFO AND MEDIA LESS THAN COMPLETE AND IT THEREFORE OUR GUESS THAT IMPROVEMENTS, IF ANY, RESULTING FROM THESE REPRESENTATIONS, MAY PROVE EVANESCENT. IF SO, WE SHALL CONTINUE TO REACT TO EPMG AS CIRCUMSTANCES MAY WARRANT.

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